

Religion & Culture

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This Power point summarizes the explanation given on
The Difference between Culture and Religion
by Khalifatul Masih IVth in a question answer session.

What is Religion?

- A **Course of Conduct** prescribed for man by the **Supreme Being**, God
 - Muslim, Christian & Jewish faiths, ...
- A **Course of Conduct** prescribed for man by **Religious Saints**
 - Hinduism & Buddhist faiths, ...

What is Culture?

- The social & religious structures and intellectual & artistic manifestations etc that characterize a society

Dictionary Definition

- Culture is a set value, which is a reward in itself or a punishment in itself.
 - There are no guiding principles
 - Culture does not relate to ***moral uplift***
 - It does not deal with ***crime and punishment***
 - It does not relate to ***life after death***

What is Culture?

- Culture and religion may have some commonalities
- Culture may start with religion but drifts away from it with passage of time

Why is a Culture Adopted?

- To reduce barriers among people of different origins
 - Brings you ***closer*** to a certain class of people
 - When a person adopts a culture of a particular society, he/she wants to identify him/herself with the sea of people around him

When a Culture is Adopted...

- Adoption may ***not interfere*** with Religion
- Adoption may be ***at the cost*** of Religion
 - Partially or in totality

Rule for Adopting a Culture

- Fundamental rule for accepting a religion is to give preference to religious values over cultural values
- *“I will always give preference to religion over worldly affairs”*

“Deen Ko Duniya Par Muqadam Karoon Gee”

Same Culture, Different Religions

CULTURE	RELIGION
WESTERN	Christian, Jewish, Buddhists, ...
INDIAN	Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs, ...

Different Culture, Same Religion

Culture	Religion
Indian	Islam
Far Eastern	Islam
Arabian	Islam
Western	Islam

Religious Culture

Culture	Religion	Commonality (examples)
Indian, Indonesian, Arabian, Western	Islam	Demands in the direction of God: like Salat
		Demands in the direction of Mankind: like Segregation of Sexes

Allegations on Religion

- Adhering to religious values can seem like being confined to a prison
- CORRECT!

“The world is a ***prison*** for believers and ***heaven*** for disbelievers” Hadith

- The confines of Shariah creates its own culture (*prison*)
- The *prison* of Shariah in this world creates heaven for the believer ultimately
- Seeing this world as a paradise i.e. living without restraint, creates suffering (*a prison*) for the disbeliever ultimately

Why Islamic Culture?

- Islam imposes restrictions that culture may not
- Most of today's cultures *do not entirely* agree with Islamic values

Cultural Clash

- In case of a clash, Religion ***has to take*** precedence
- Operating out of cultural norms is termed as ***not part*** of the culture
- This can result in ***retaliation*** by culture in the form of social rejection

Restrictions of Religion

- For example, Islamic Purdah
 - One of the requirements for women is not to dress in public as done in private gatherings
 - Another requirement is not to shake hands with opposite sex outside the permissible family ties

Cultural Compromises

- Islamic Culture, irrespective of global location, ***prohibits*** compromise on fundamental principles
- An Ahmadi Muslim ***must*** stand by Religion and ***detach*** from Un-Islamic Cultural values

Advantages of Adopting Culture

- Different cultures have different inherent positive values
- ***Adopt them!***
- “Adopt good wherever you find it!”

Group Activity – 1

- Western Cultural practices that are Islamic, like
 - Discipline in places of worship
 - Respect for Rules (timelines, punctuality, ...)
- **Suggestions for improvement**

Group Activity – 2

- Western cultural practices that are un-Islamic, like:
 - Free mixing in the name of family friendship
 - Adult freedom versus religious values
- **Suggestions for improvement**

Inputs from Group – 1

- Personal hygiene
- Cleanliness in mosque
- Follow the Law (like traffic laws) and Jamaat office holders
- Be hospitable without being nosy

Input from Group – 1

- Discipline & Punctuality
- Take turns when speaking, especially when in debate (do not talk over others)
- Open hearted to other cultures
- Helping your neighbors

Input from Group – 2

Birthday Parties / Halloween/ Baby Showers etc

- We can avoid them by:
 - Politely declining invitations, and not throwing one ourselves
 - Observing Islamic Purdah
 - Being Role Models
 - Practicing *Taqwa*

Input from Group – 2

Lack of modesty in a professional & school environment

- We should represent ourselves in a way that explains & demonstrates our actions:
 - Wear Islamic attire
 - Avoid after-work / electronic networking
 - Avoid socializing with work communities where Islamic values are compromised
 - Avoid being in school pictures
 - Avoid going to school functions such as prom and grad night
 - Avoid playing sports with inappropriate clothes

Some Food for Thought:

Extract of Letter by National Sec. Tarbiyyat

Salat Discipline & Modest Dress:

- Develop respect for prayers by dressing modestly.
- **Avoid wearing capris which reveal the shins and ankles, short sleeve shirts, transparent/net dupattas which show the hair and tend to slip off the head and see-through clothing which reveal the body parts.**
- **In your meetings, practice covering your head completely with your scarf/ duppata** so that it fully covers the hair and remains secure during the duration of the prayers.
- Come to prayer with modest clothing so that your arms and legs are fully covered.

**JazakAllah
For
Your Attention**